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Aggie With Distinguished Career Selected To Lead Texas A&M Journalism Program

Kathleen McElroy '81 will join the Department of Communication and Journalism as part of A&M's renewed effort to train the next generation of media professionals.

Texas A&M University Division of Marketing and Communications • JUNE 13, 2023

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Kathleen O. McElroy '81 poses with Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences José Luis Bermúdez in front of Texas A&M's Academic Building on Tuesday, June 13.

Chris Jarvis/Texas A&M University Division of Marketing and Communications

A veteran journalist with more than 40 years of experience has been hired to direct Texas A&M University's new journalism program.

Kathleen O. McElroy, a 1981 Texas A&M graduate, will oversee the program's vision to prepare the next generation of journalists, forge collaborations and work to rebuild community confidence in the free press.

"There is so much trust in A&M and the Aggie core values, and we want to position the planned new journalism degrees and program as an integral part of the Aggie brand," McElroy said.

The university's expanded program within the Department of Communication and Journalism aims to build on existing partnerships and collaborations with KAMU public television and radio, 12th Man Productions and campus organizations, while exploring potential partnerships with other journalism platforms. A priority for McElroy is to build a

curriculum that incorporates innovative ways to deliver news to underserved audiences across Texas and beyond.

"I couldn't pass up this opportunity to be a part of something transformational for Texas A&M, for the state of Texas and for journalism," said McElroy, who begins her new role in August. "We will make a positive difference – through our students in extracurricular and course content, as well as through the research programs we hope to build – and I can't wait to get started."

McElroy's journalism career includes 20 years at The New York Times, one of the largest media organizations in the world. She worked in various management positions, including associate managing editor in charge of weekend editions, dining editor, deputy sports editor and deputy editor of the website. She previously worked for The National, an all-sports daily; Newsday; the Austin American-Statesman; The Huntsville Item; and The Eagle in Bryan-College Station.

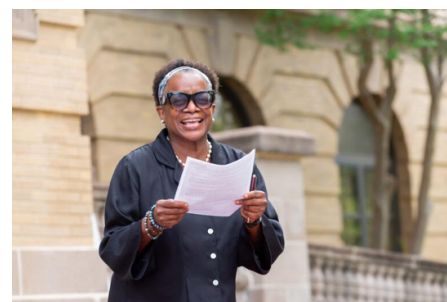
She was a Pulitzer juror for the national journalism awards announced in May. Her research includes the relationship between news media and race, particularly regarding newsroom practices – including the Pulitzers – as well as obituaries and sports.

Most recently, McElroy was a professor at the School of Journalism and Media at The University of Texas at Austin, where she served as director for four years through 2022. She received her doctorate in journalism from UT in 2014 and a master's degree from New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study. Her thesis was on the obituaries of civil rights leaders.

She graduated from Texas A&M with a degree in broadcast journalism in 1981 and is a former reporter for A&M's student-run newspaper, The Battalion. McElroy was inducted into the A&M Former Journalism Student Association Hall of Honor in 2007, and in 2013, she became the first Aggie selected to the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association Hall of Fame. She is a founding board member of Friends of The Battalion, a nonprofit created to promote the long-term sustainability of the independent student newspaper.

Texas A&M President M. Katherine Banks announced a revitalized journalism program as part of her vision for transformational education at A&M in September. The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents approved a new journalism major in February. The program will be administered by the Department of Communication and Journalism in the College of Arts and Sciences, pending approval from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Dr. José Luis Bermúdez said Dr. McElroy



McElroy signs her appointment letter during a ceremony in Academic Plaza Tuesday morning.

Chris Jarvis/Texas A&M University Division of Marketing and Communications

brings a wealth of experience and a deep passion to the new role.

"I am optimistic about what's ahead for journalism education at this university and believe strongly in offering the opportunity for our students to earn a degree through a well-rounded curriculum," Bermúdez said. "It's critical that we prepare students for the evolving media landscape, and I look forward to working with Dr. McElroy and the Department of Communication and Journalism as we enter this exciting new chapter for journalism at Texas A&M University."

For 55 years, Texas A&M had a journalism department and degree before it was dropped in 2004 after making the announcement a year earlier. A&M continued to offer journalism education as a minor and later as a Liberal Arts degree in university studies.

McElroy's return to A&M to guide the growth of journalism comes at a pivotal moment in the program's history, said Hart Blanton, head of the Department of Communication and Journalism.

"President Banks made a bold decision to elevate journalism at A&M, at a time when news organizations face historic challenges," Blanton said. "Dr. McElroy brings the vision and experiences needed to rise to her call."

Plans for the new program include emphasizing technical, digital and critical thinking skills — all highly regarded proficiencies that thriving communication and media companies value.

"In time, through academic and industry partnerships, our goal for A&M journalism is nothing short of becoming a trusted source for news and information in the state," Blanton said. "Recruitment of Dr. McElroy is a huge step forward on this journey."

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